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INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUCNISL/ISLAMIC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5252
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0584
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 2844
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0887
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0598
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1123
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2299
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2903
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 JAKARTA 001470

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: IRANIAN DEPUTY FM'S SPEECH FALLS FLAT IN JAKARTA

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4 (b+d).

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammadi outlined a grand vision of international order in a July 29 speech in Jakarta. In his schema, Iran is inspiring a global movement of the world's oppressed peoples against domination by the U.S. and its allies. Mohammadi--who extolled Shia Islam as truly revolutionary--left his (mostly Sunni) Indonesian audience perplexed. Mohammadi was in Jakarta for a conference sponsored by a local Muslim organization. It is doubtful that his visit did much to bring Iran and Indonesia closer together in any appreciable way. END SUMMARY.

VISIT TO JAKARTA

¶12. (SBU) Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Research and Training Manuchehr Mohammadi outlined his country's vision of the emerging international order in a July 29 speech in Jakarta. He spoke to an audience of approximately 150 current and former Department of Foreign Affairs (DEPLU) officials and foreign diplomats in an event sponsored by DEPLU and the Indonesian Council on World Affairs. Mohammadi was in Jakarta to lead the Iranian delegation to the July 29-August 1 Third International Conference of Islamic Scholars organized by the Indonesian broad-based Muslim organization Nadhlatul Ulama (see septel).

THE FAILURE OF (WESTERN) THEORIES

¶13. (U) Mohammadi began by arguing that Western social science had failed both to predict and to explain the success of Iran's Islamic revolution. He then promised to offer a uniquely Islamic theory of revolution and explain how it was shaping the evolving international order. This theory was built, he argued, on an essentially Islamic definition of politics as "a search for justice."

¶14. (U) As an alternative to Western theories of revolution, Mohammadi offered an "Islamic" theory that held successful revolutions must contain three key elements:

--Leadership;
--Mass participation; and,
--Revolutionary ideology.

Further, Islamic revolution sought to redress past instances

of injustice. Chief among these, he argued, was the subjugation of non-Western peoples to Western colonialism.

SHIA ISLAM MORE REVOLUTIONARY

¶5. (U) Shia Islam was a revolutionary ideology, Mohammadi argued: unlike its Sunni counterpart, Shia Islam had an explicit theory of political legitimacy based on justice. Shias could--indeed must--work to overthrow unjust rulers. Conversely, Sunnis were enjoined to obey rulers even if they were unjust. Mohammadi also argued that Shia Islam had never closed the door to *ijtihad* (independent interpretation of Islamic law), as Sunnis had done. This gave Shias a philosophical flexibility enabling them to deal more effectively with problems of the contemporary era.

¶6. (U) Iran's 1978-79 revolution was, Mohammadi argued, the first time in world history when all these elements came together in a successful Islamic Revolution. Although Iran had been first, Mohammadi asserted, it would not be the last in revolution. Instead, the basic alignment of forces that had led to the Iranian Revolution had begun to foment uprisings across the globe and was remaking the contemporary international order.

WORLD ORDER IN "TRANSITIONAL" PHASE

¶7. (U) Mohammadi offered a tour d'horizon of the international system from the Peace of Westphalia to the present era, which he described as the post-Cold War transition period. Throughout these 300 years, there was a steady evolution of a global system that favored Western

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oppression and exploitation of non-Western peoples, he argued. This system reached its climax in the Cold War's bipolar system of superpower competition.

¶8. (U) With the collapse of the bipolar international order, the world had entered a transitional phase. Mohammadi dismissed several alternative accounts of the contemporary international order: Krauthammer's unipolar moment, Fukuyama's end of history, Huntington's clash of civilizations, and Kagan's struggle between autocracy and democracy. These accounts were flawed because they did not account for the forces unleashed by the Iranian Revolution--forces that Mohammadi claimed were reshaping the world.

REVOLT OF OPPRESSED PEOPLES

¶9. (U) Mohammadi dubbed his new paradigm the "clash with domination." In this schema, the world was gradually dividing into two competing camps: Domineering and Counter-Domineering. The central player in the domineering camp, Mohammadi argued, was the United States. It also included the EU; industrialized countries aligned with the West, such as Russia and Japan; developing states influenced by the West; and Islamic states dependent on the West.

¶10. (U) Iran had emerged as the key player in the counter-domineering camp. This group also included other Shia populations; "independent" Islamic countries; developing nations in Africa, Asia and Latin America; and some populations in the West. He cited "anti-war groups, environmentalists, and Greenpeace" as examples of counter-domineering groups in the West.

¶11. (U) Mohammadi provided a lengthy explanation of how the domineering and counter-domineering groups differed on key issues. According to his view, the counter-domineering camp would continue to garner support from the "oppressed masses" around the world. It would also continue to foment uprisings against the domineering powers, as Mohammadi argued, was occurring in places like Afghanistan, Lebanon and Iraq.

INDONESIANS PERPLEXED

¶12. (C) The Indonesian audience--which had expected a policy speech and was served a graduate seminar instead--seemed puzzled. (Note: Mission has sent a copy of Mohammadi's presentation to EAP/MTS.) One participant commented that he still did not understand Iran's position in the nuclear standoff with the P5 1--a subject Mohammadi did not address in his speech. Ambassador Wisber Loeis, one of Indonesia's most senior retired diplomats, commented that Indonesians had heard many of these themes before--from former President Sukarno, who was known to love grand revolutionary theories (and basically brought Indonesia to its knees through his Socialist economic policies).

¶13. (C) Mohammadi's proposed global order also ran afoul of Indonesia's long-standing preference for multilateral approaches to global issues. Makarim Wibisono, Indonesia's PermRep to the UN in Geneva, commented to poloff that Mohammadi's approach had no place for the UN. Nor did it offer any substantive role for regional organizations like ASEAN. This, according to Wibisono, rendered the Iranian's theory fundamentally unrealistic. Mohammadi also alienated Indonesians with his dismissive comments about Sunni Islam.

¶14. (SBU) Mohammadi also alienated foreign diplomats. During the Q&A, for example, Mohammadi triggered a heated exchange with the Egyptian Ambassador by asserting that Nasser's efforts had failed--despite having mass support--because there was not enough genuine mass participation. The Egyptian diplomat walked out during the exchange.

A SPEECH THAT FELL FLAT

¶15. (C) Although he promised something new, Mohammadi's
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theory offered little more than warmed over speechifying. His rhetoric seemed designed to tap into Indonesian resentments over their history under Dutch colonial rule. Yet it fell flat in a country that is more focused on competing in a globalized economy than it is in nursing historical grudges. In addition, his comments about triumphant Shias and subservient Sunnis did not do much to ingratiate himself to the mainly Sunni audience. All in all, Mohammadi offered a bleak future. Nobody in his Indonesian audience seemed keen to have their country follow Iran's revolutionary example.

¶16. (C) Senior Iranian officials visit Indonesia intermittently and Mohammadi's visit fell into this general pattern. It is doubtful that his visit did much to bring Iran and Indonesia closer together in any appreciable way. We are not aware of any new bilateral initiatives that resulted from his visit.

BIO INFORMATION

¶17. (C) Mohammadi completed his MA and PhD in the United States. He previously served as governor of Iran's Baluchestan Province. He speaks very good English and appears to read widely in American and European literature on political science and international relations. Although he has held a number of government positions, Mohammadi conducts himself very much as an academic. One DEPLU contact described Mohammadi as the Iranian Foreign Ministry's most prominent strategic thinker and policy planner.

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